



Learning Project 5 Revising for Style

(Note: *Italicized portions should be directed to the students.*)

Inquiry Activity 5-3: Recognizing the Writer's Voice

1. Identifying the Problem

In this Inquiry Activity we are going to look at writing passages that your instructor will provide to try to recognize the writer's voice.

This is a good opportunity to cross over to Reading and address a writer's style. Use any writer you enjoy reading and teaching. Since the students will be writing essays from generic, but personal topics, we suggest drawing from Dave Barry, E. B. White, Bill Bryson, David Sedaris, Maya Angelou, Brent Staples, and Annie Dillard.

Here are some problem clarification questions or directions you may want to consider when "Identifying the Problem" in the Language Arts, Writing Test.

Scan the passage:

What type of written communication is the passage?

Why do you think this passage was written?

How is the passage organized?

Note what stands out in the way the passage is written.

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Ask yourself questions like these about the passage, taking note of the ones that were especially helpful so that you can remember to use them when you take the writing test.

What do you know about the author of this passage?

Have you read other things by this writer? If you have, what do you expect this passage to be like when you read it?

3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

Read the passage your instructor has given out. Try to be aware of the reasoning and thinking steps that you are using. The following questions and strategies can be helpful.

Planning: *Use your experience with writing essays to make sense of this one. How will you use your experience to answer this question?*

Doing the Work: *Working in pairs or small groups, answer the following questions or do the following activities. You should read the essay individually:*

- *What can you say about sentence structure used by this writer? Are the sentences generally long, short, or is there a variety?*
- *How would you characterize the words the writer uses? Are they easy to read and understand, or are they difficult to read and unusual, words you have not often seen?*
- *Does the writing sound formal or friendly and conversational?*
- *What would you say defines the style of this writer?*
- *Why is recognizing style important?*



- *Do all writers have a style that can be identified?*

Not all writers have a style. In newspapers and magazines, the editors create a publication style that presents all the articles in essentially the same style. Signed columns sound very different because the individual writer stands out from the rest.

Many writers who pump out a lot of books in a specific genre (mystery, gothic, romance, action, science fiction) seem (and may be) interchangeable. The format is more important than the writing.

- *With your partner, develop a statement about the style of the author you have read.*

4. Sharing with Others

Telling other people what you know helps you to understand the material better. So take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge of the revisions you made and the approach you have developed, but also to learn it more completely.

Small Groups: *Do the following in your small group:*

Compare your discussion of the writer's style with others in the group.

Compare the process each group member used to analyze the author's work. Agree on a process you might use during a test to identify style of an author.

Agree on the best way to define a writer's style.

Discuss what you have learned about style and how it is shown.

Whole Class: *Report to the class:*

The different ways the group members went about identifying style,

The different indicators of style your group thought most effective,

What your group considers important about recognizing style, and

How knowing about style can be helpful during a test.

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Reflecting: *Think about how well you understood what you have done.*

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don't get much time to think about what you learned.

How has thinking about one writer's style helped you to understand about the writing process?

Why is recognizing the style of writing important to an understanding of the essay? Of the writing process?

Can you write in someone else's style? Why would this be difficult? How might it make the writing process easier for you?

Extending: *Extend what you learned to new situations.*

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information learned in this Inquiry Activity to other information or situations.

By now you have read several examples of your partner's work. What are some indicators in your partner's writing that can be considered his or her style?

What are some things in your own writing that can be considered a part of your style?

How might your recognition of your style or someone else's style help you in writing?



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How would you use the skills you are developing to express ideas clearly in your own writing and in your writing in the workplace?

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods to help you pass the GED test.

Evaluate what you have learned about writing style.

How can understanding style help you write?

What kinds of writing strategies did you learn from this exercise?

